

STORYS OF
THE
YOUNG ROBBER,
AND
PUSS IN BOOTS.



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STORY OF THE YOUNG ROBBER.



I WAS born at the little town of Frosinone, which lies at the skirts of the Abruzzi. My father had made a little property in trade, and gave me some education, as he intended me for the church; but I had kept gay company too much to relish the cowl, so I grew up a loiterer about the place. I was a heedless fellow, a little quarrelsome on occasion, but goodhumoured in the main; so I made my way very well for a time, until I fell in love. There lived in our town a surveyor or land-bailiff of the prince's, who had a young daughter, a beautiful girl of sixteen: she was looked upon as something better than the common run of our townsfolk, and was kept almost entirely at home. I saw her occasionally, and became madly in love with her—she looked so fresh and tender, and so different from the sun-burned females to whom I had been accustomed.

As my father kept me in money, I always dressed well, and took all opportunities of showing myself off to advantage in the eyes of the little beauty. I used to see her

at church ; and as I could play a little upon the guitar, I gave a tune sometimes under her window of an evening ; and I tried to have interviews with her in her father's vineyard, not far from the town, where she sometimes walked. She was evidently pleased with me, but she was young and shy ; and her father kept a strict eye upon her, and took alarm at my attentions, for he had a bad opinion of me, and looked for a better match for his daughter. I became furious at the difficulties thrown in my way, having been accustomed always to easy success among the women, being considered one of the smartest young fellows of the place.

Her father brought home a suitor for her, a rich farmer from a neighbouring town. The wedding-day was appointed, and preparations were making. I got sight of her at her window, and I thought she looked sadly at me. I determined the match should not take place, cost what it might. I met her intended bridegroom in the market place, and could not restrain the expression of my rage. A few hot words passed between us, when I drew my stiletto and stabbed him to the heart. I fled to a neighbouring church for refuge, and with a little money I obtained absolution, but I did not dare to venture from my asylum.

At that time our captain was forming his

troop. He had known me from boyhood; and hearing of my situation, came to me in secret, and made such offers, that I agreed to enrol myself among his followers. Indeed, I had more than once thought of taking to this mode of life, having known several brave fellows of the mountains, who used to spend their money freely among us youngsters of the town. I accordingly left my asylum late one night, repaired to the appointed place of meeting, took the oaths prescribed, and became one of the troop. We were for some time in a distant part of the mountains, and our wild adventurous kind of life hit my fancy wonderfully, and diverted my thoughts. At length they returned with all their violence to the recollection of Rosetta: the solitude in which I often found myself gave me time to brood over her image; and, as I have kept watch at night over our sleeping camp in the mountains, my feelings have been roused almost to a fever.

At length we shifted our ground, and determined to make a descent upon the road between Terracina and Naples. In the course of our expedition we passed a day or two in the woody mountains which rise above Frosinone. I cannot tell you how I felt when I looked down upon the place, and distinguished the residence of Rosetta. I

determined to have an interview with her --but to what purpose? I could not expect that she would quit her home, and accompany me in my hazardous life among the mountains. She had been brought up too tenderly for that; and when I looked upon the women who were associated with some of our troop, I could not have borne the thought of her being their companion. All return to my former life was likewise hopeless, for a price was set upon my head. Still I determined to see her; the very hazard and fruitlessness of the thing made me furious to accomplish it.

It is about three weeks since I persuaded our captain to draw down to the vicinity of Frosinone, in hopes of entrapping some of its principal inhabitants, and compelling them to a ransom. We were lying in ambush towards evening, not far from the vineyard of Rosetta's father. I stole quietly from my companions, and drew near to reconnoitre the place of her frequent walks. How my heart beat when among the vines I beheld the gleaming of a white dress! I knew it must be Rosetta's; it being rare for any female of the place to dress in white. I advanced secretly and without noise, until, putting aside the vines, and stood suddenly before her. She uttered a piercing shriek, but I seized her in my arms, put my hand

upon her mouth, and conjured her to be silent. I poured out all the frenzy of my passion; offered to renounce my mode of life; to put my fate in her hands; to fly with her where we might live in safety together. All that I could say or do would not pacify her. Instead of love, horror and affright seemed to have taken possession of her breast. She struggled partly from my grasp, and filled the air with her cries.

In an instant the captain and the rest of my companions were around us. I would have given any thing at that moment had she been safe out of our hands, and in her father's house. It was too late. The captain pronounced her a prize, and ordered that she should be borne to the mountains. I represented to him that she was my prize; that I had a previous claim to her; and I mentioned my former attachment. He sneered bitterly in reply; observed that brigands had no business with village intrigues, and that, according to the laws of the troop, all spoils of the kind were determined by lot. Love and jealousy were raging in my heart, but I had to choose between obedience and death. I surrendered her to the captain, and we made for the mountains.

She was overcome by affright, and her steps were so feeble and faltering that it was necessary to support her. I could not en-

dure the idea that my comrades should touch her, and assuming a forced tranquility, begged that she might be confided to me, as one to whom she was more accustomed. The captain regarded me, for a moment, with a searching look, but I bore it without flinching, and he consented. I took her in my arms; she was almost senseless. Her head rested on my shoulder; I felt her breath on my face, and it seemed to fan the flame which devoured me. Oh God! to have this glowing treasure in my arms, and yet to think it was not mine!

We arrived at the foot of the mountain. I ascended it with difficulty, particularly where the woods were thick, but I would not relinquish my delicious burden. I reflected with rage, however, that I must soon do so. The thoughts that so delicate a creature must be abandoned to my rude companions, maddened me. I felt tempted, the stiletto in my hand, to cut my way through them all, and bear her off in triumph. I scarcely conceived the idea before I saw its rashness; but my brain was fevered with the thought that any but myself should enjoy her charms. I endeavoured to outstrip my companions by the quickness of my movements, and to get a little distance ahead, in case any favourable opportunity of escape should present. Vain effort!

The voice of the captain suddenly ordered a halt. I trembled, but had to obey. The poor girl partly opened a languid eye, but was without strength or motion. I laid her upon the grass. The captain darted on me a terrible look of suspicion, and ordered me to scour the woods with my companions in search of some shepherd, who might be sent to her father's to demand a ransom.

I saw at once the peril. To resist with violence was certain death, but to leave her alone, in the power of the captain!---I spoke out then with a fervour, inspired by my passion and my despair. I reminded the captain that I was the first to seize her; that she was my prize; and that my previous attachment for her ought to make her sacred among my companions. I insisted, therefore, that he should pledge me his word to respect her, otherwise I should refuse obedience to his orders. His only reply was to cock his carbine, and at the signal my comrades did the same. They laughed with cruelty at my impotent rage. What could I do? I felt the madness of resistance. I was menaced on all hands, and my companions obliged me to follow them. She remained alone with the chief ---yes, alone---and almost lifeless!---

Here the robber paused in his recital, overpowered by his emotions, Great drops of

sweat stood on his forehead; he panted rather than breathed; his brawny bosom rose and fell like the waves of a troubled sea. When he had become a little calm, he continued his recital.

I was not long in finding a shepherd, said he. I ran with the rapidity of a deer, eager, if possible, to get back before what I dreaded might take place. I had left my companions far behind, and I rejoined them before they had reached onehalf the distance I had made. I hurried them back to the place where we had left the captain. As we approached, I beheld him seated by the side of Rosetta. His triumphant look, and the dessolate condition of the unfortunate girl, left me no doubt of her fate. I know not how I restrained my fury.

It was with extreme difficulty, and by guiding her hand, that she was made to trace a few characters, requesting her father to send three hundred dollars as her ransom. The letter was dispatched by the shepherd. When he was gone, the chief turned sternly to me: "You have set an example," said he, "of mutiny and self-will, which, if indulged, would be ruinous to the troop. Had I treated you as our laws require, this bullet would have been driven through your brain. But you are an old friend; I have borne patiently with your fury and your

folly. I have even protected you from a foolish passion that would have unmanned you. As to this girl, the laws of our association must have their course." So saying, he gave his commands: lots were drawn, and the helpless girl was abandoned to the troop.

Here the robber paused again, panting with fury, and it was some moments before he could resume his story.

Hell, said he, was raging in my heart. I beheld the impossibility of avenging myself; and I felt that, according to the articles in which we stood bound to one another, the captain was in the right. I rushed with frenzy from the place; I threw myself upon the earth; tore up the grass with my hands, and beat my head and gnashed my teeth in agony and rage. When at length I returned, I beheld the wretched victim, pale, dishevelled, her dress torn and disordered. An emotion of pity, for a moment, subdued my fierce feelings. I bore her to the foot of a tree, and leaned her gently against it. I took my gourd, which was filled with wine, and applying it to her lips, endeavoured to make her swallow a little. To what a condition was she reduced! she, whom I had once seen the pride of Frosinone! whom but a short time before I had beheld sporting in her father's vineyard, so fresh, and beautiful, and happy! Her teeth were clenched;

her eyes fixed on the ground; her form without motion, and in a state of absolute insensibility. I hung over her in an agony of recollection at all that she had been, and of anguish at what I now beheld her. I darted round a look of horror at my companions, who seemed like so many fiends exulting in the downfall of an angel! and I felt a horror at myself for being their accomplice.

The captain, always suspicious, saw, with his usual penetration, what was passing within me, and ordered me to go upon the ridge of the woods, to keep a look-out over the neighbourhood, and await the return of the shepherd. I obeyed, of course, stifling the fury that raged within me, though I felt for the moment that he was my most deadly foe.

On my way, however, a ray of reflection came across my mind. I perceived that the captain was but following, with strictness, the terrible laws to which we had sworn fidelity. That the passion by which I had been blinded might, with justice, have been fatal to me, but for his forbearance; that he had penetrated my soul, and had taken precautions, by sending me out of the way, to prevent my committing any excess in my anger. From that instant I felt that I was capable of pardoning him.

Occupied with these thoughts, I arrived at the foot of the mountain. The country was solitary and secure, and in a short time I beheld the shepherd at a distance crossing the plain. I hastened to meet him. He had obtained nothing. He had found the father plunged in the deepest distress. He had read the letter with violent emotion, and then calming himself with a sudden exertion, he had replied coldly, "My daughter has been dishonoured by those wretches : let her be returned without ransom, or let her die !"

I shuddered at this reply. I knew, according to the laws of our troop, her death was inevitable. Our oaths required it. I felt, nevertheless, that not having been able to have her to myself, I could become her executioner !

The robber again paused with agitation. I sat musing upon his last frightful words, which proves to what excess the passions may be carried when escaped from all moral restraint. There was a horrible verity in this story that reminded me of some of the tragic fictions of Dante.

We now come to a fatal moment, resumed the bandit. After the report of the shepherd, I returned with him, and the chieftain received from his lips the refusal of the father.

At a signal, which we all understood,

we followed him to some distance from the victim. He there pronounced her sentence of death. Every one stood ready to execute his order; but I interfered. I observed that there was something due to pity as well as to justice. That I was as ready as any one to approve the implacable law, which was to serve as a warning to all those who hesitated to pay the ransoms demanded for our prisoners; but that though the sacrifice was proper, it ought to be made without cruelty. The night is approaching, continued I; she will soon be wrapped in sleep; let her then be dispatched. All I now claim on the score of former fondness for her is, let me strike the blow. I will do it as surely, but more tenderly than another. Several raised their voices against my proposition, but the captain imposed silence on them. He told me I might conduct her into a thicket at some distance, and he relied upon my promise.

I hastened to seize upon my prey. There was a forlorn kind of triumph at having at length become her exclusive possessor. I bore her off into the thickness of the forest. She remained in the same state of insensibility and stupor. I was thankful that she did not recollect me; for had she once murmured my name, I should have been overcome. She slept at length in the arms of

him who was to poniard her. Many were the conflicts I underwent before I could bring myself to strike the blow. But my heart had become sore by the recent conflicts it had undergone, and I dreaded lest, by procrastination, some other should become her executioner. When her repose had continued for some time, I separated myself gently from her, that I might not disturb her sleep, and seizing suddenly my poinard, plunged it into her bosom. A painful and concentrated murmur, but without any convulsive movement, accompanied her last sigh.---So perished this unfortunate!



PUSS IN BOOTS.

THERE was a miller who had three sons, and when he died he divided what he possessed among them in the following manner: ---He gave his mill to the eldest, his ass to the second, and his cat to the youngest.

Each of the brothers accordingly took what belonged to him without the help of an attorney, who would soon have brought their little fortune to nothing in law-expenses.

The poor young fellow who had nothing but the cat complained that he was hardly used: "My brothers," said he, "by joining their stocks together, may do very well in the world; but for me, when I have eaten my cat, and made a fur-cap of his skin, I may soon die of hunger!"

The cat, which all this time sat listening just inside the door of a cupboard, now ventured to come out, and addressed him as follows:

"Do not thus afflict yourself, my good master; you have only to give me a bag, and get a pair of boots made for me, so that I may scamper through the dirt and the brambles, and you shall see that you are not so ill provided for as you imagine."

Though the cat's master did not much

depend upon these promises yet as he had often observed the cunning tricks Puss used to catch rats and mice, such as hanging by the hindlegs, and hiding in the meal to make them believe that he was dead, he did not entirely despair of his being of some use to him in his unhappy condition.

When the cat had obtained what he asked for, he gaily began to equip himself; he drew on the boots---and putting the bag about his neck, he took hold of strings with his forepaws, and, bidding his master take courage, immediately sallied forth.

The first attempt Puss made was to go into a warren, in which there was a great number of rabbits. He put some bran and some parsley into his bag; and then, stretching himself out at full length as if he was dead, he waited for some young rabbits, (which as yet knew nothing of the cunning tricks of the world) to come and get into the bag, the better to feast upon the dainties he had put into it.

Scarcely had he lain down before he succeeded as well as could be wished. A giddy young rabbit crept into the bag, and the cat immediately drew the strings, and killed him without mercy.

Puss, proud of his prey, hastened directly to the palace, where he asked to speak to the king. On being shown into the apart

ment of his majesty, he made a low bow, and said,---“ I have brought you, sire, this rabbit from the warren of my lord the marquis of Carabas, who commanded me to present it to your majesty with the assurance of his respect.” This was the title the cat thought proper to bestow upon his master. “ Tell my lord marquis of Carabas,” replied the king, “ that I accept of his present with pleasure, and that I am greatly obliged to him.”

Soon after the cat laid himself down in the same manner in a field of corn, and had as much good fortune as before; for two fine partridges got into his bag, which he immediately killed and carried to the palace. The king received them as he had done the rabbit, and ordered his servants to give the messenger something to drink. In this manner he continued to carry presents of game to the king from my lord marquis of Carabas, once at least every week.

One day, the cat having heard that the king intended to take a ride that morning by the river side with his daughter, who was the most beautiful princess in the world, he said to his master,---“ If you will but follow my advice your fortune is made. Take off your clothes, and bathe yourself in the river, just in the place I shall show you and leave the rest to me.”

The marquis of Carabas did exactly as he was desired, without being able to guess at what the cat intended. While he was bathing the king passed by, and Puss directly called out as loud as he could bawl, ---“Help! help! my lord marquis of Carabas is in danger of being drowned!” The king hearing the cries, put his head out at the window of his carriage to see what was the matter; when, perceiving the very cat which had brought him so many presents, he ordered his attendants to go directly to the assistance of my lord marquis of Carabas.

While they were employed in taking the marquis out of the river, the cat ran to the king’s carriage and told his majesty, that while his master was bathing, some thieves had run off with his clothes as they lay by the river side, the cunning cat all the time having hid them under a large stone.

The king hearing this, commanded the officers of his wardrobe to fetch one of the handsomest suits it contained, and present it to my lord marquis of Carabas, at the same time loading him with a thousand attentions. As the fine clothes they brought him made him look like a gentleman, and set off his person, which was very comely, to the greatest advantage, the king’s daughter was mightily taken with his appearance,

and the marquis of Carabas had no sooner cast upon her two or three respectful glances, than she became violently in love with him.

The king insisted on his getting into the carriage, and taking a ride with them. The cat, enchanted to see how well his scheme was likely to succeed, ran before to a meadow that was reaping, and said to the reapers,---“ Good people, If you do not tell the king, who will soon pass this way, that the meadow you are reaping belongs to my lord marquis of Carabas, you shall be chopped as small as minced meat.”

The king did not fail to ask the reapers to whom the meadow belonged.---“ To my lord marquis of Carabas,” said they all at once; for the threats of the cat had terribly frightened them. “ You have hear a very fine piece of land, my lord marquis,” said the king. “ Truly, sire,” replied he, “ it does not fail to bring me every year a plentiful harvest.”

The cat, which still went on before, now came to a field where some other labourers were making sheaves of the corn they had reaped, to whom he said as before,---“ Good people, if you do not tell the king, who will presently pass this way, that the corn you have reaped in this field belongs to my lord marquis of Carabas, you shall be chopped as small as minced meat.”

The king accordingly passed a moment after, and inquired to whom the corn he saw belonged.---“To my lord marquis of Carabas,” answered they very glibly; upon which the king again complimented the marquis on his noble possessions.

The cat still continued to go before, and gave the same charge to all the people he met with; so that the king was greatly astonished at the splendid fortune of my lord marquis of Carabas.

Puss at length arrived at a stately castle, which belonged to an Ogre, the richest ever known; for all the lands the king had passed through and admired were his. The cat took care to learn every particular about the Ogre, and what he could do, and then asked to speak with him, saying, as he entered the room in which he was, that he could not pass so near his castle without doing himself the honour to inquire for his health.

The Ogre received him as civilly as an Ogre could do, and desired him to be seated. “I have been informed,” said the cat, “that you have the gift of changing yourself into all sorts of animals; into a lion, or an elephant, for example.”---“It is very true,” replied the Ogre somewhat sternly; “and to convince you, I will directly take the form of a lion.”---The cat was so much terrified at finding himself so near a lion,

that he sprang from him, and climbed to the roof of the house; but not without much difficulty, as his boots were not very fit to walk upon the tiles.

Some minutes after, the cat perceiving that the Ogre had quitted the form of a lion, ventured to come down from the tiles, and owned that he had been a good deal frightened. "I have been further informed," continued the cat, "but I know not how to believe it, that you have the power of taking the form of the smallest animals also; for example, of changing yourself to a rat or a mouse; I confess I should think this must be impossible."---"Impossible! you shall see;" and at the same instant he changed himself into a mouse, and began to frisk about the room. The cat no sooner cast his eyes upon the Ogre in this form, than he sprang upon him, and devoured him in an instant.

In the mean time the king, admiring, as he came near it, the magnificent castle of the Ogre, ordered his attendants to drive up to the gates, as he wished to take a nearer view of it. The cat, hearing the noise of the Carriage on the drawbridge, immediately came out, saying,---"Your majesty is welcome to the castle of my lord marquis of Carabas."---"And is this splendid castle your's also, my lord marquis of Carabas?---"

I never saw any thing more stately than the building, or more beautiful than the park and pleasure-grounds around it; no doubt the castle is no less magnificent within than without; pray, my lord marquis, indulge me with a sight of it."

The marquis gave his hand to the young princess as she alighted, and followed the king, who went before;---they entered a spacious hall, where they found a splendid collation which the Ogre had prepared for some friends he had that day expected to visit him; but who, hearing that the king with the princess and a great gentleman of the court were within had not dared to enter.

The king was so much charmed with the amiable qualities and noble fortune of the marquis of Carabas, and the young princess too had fallen so violently in love with him, that when the king had partaken of the collation, and drank a few glasses of wine, he said to the marquis,---"It will be your own fault, my lord marquis of Carabas, if you do not soon become my son-in-law." The marquis received the intelligence with a thousand respectful acknowledgments, accepted the honour conferred upon him, and married the princess that very day.

The cat became a great lord, and never after ran after rats and mice but for his amusement.

ANECDOTE.

THE LAWYER AND THE CHIMNEY-SWEEPER.

A ROGUEISH old lawyer was planning new sin,
 As he lay on his bed in a fit of the gout ;
 The mails and the daylight were just coming in,
 The milkmaids and rush-lights were just going out ;

When a chimney-sweep's boy, who had made a mistake,
 Came flop down the flue with a clattering rush,

And bawl'd, as he gave his black muzzle a shake,
 " My master's a-coming to give you a brush."

" If that be the case," said the cunning old elf,

" There's no time to lose—it is high time to
 flee,---

Ere he gives me a brush, I will brush off myself---

If I wait for the devil---the devil take me !"

So he limp'd to the door without saying his prayers ;

But Old Nick was too deep to be nick'd of his
 prey ;

For the knave broke his neck by a tumble down
 stairs,

And thus ran to the devil by running away.

FINIS.

